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the idea of an American orientation and conducted a great deal of propaganda in the United States. A dispute broke out also among the Far Eastern communists as to the selection of the Republican capital. Those who stood for greater independence suggested that the capital should be established there where contact with the non-Russian world was most intimate, in Vladivostok. The Bolshevik Central Committee, on the other hand, realized the dangers inherent in such a move. It ruled that the headquarters of the Far Eastern government should be in the Russian city of Chita and not in the cosmopolitan port of Vladivostok.

Throughout its existence the F.E.R. had a very difficult time. Parts of the Republic were occupied by Japanese troops and others were the scene of white guard activities. Accordingly, the government of the F.E.R. exercised only a nominal sovereignty over certain of its provinces. Paradoxically enough, the Japanese occupation of the F.E.R. was not only the chief source of its weakness but also its principal *raison d'être*. The setting-up of the F.E.R. enabled the Russian Far Easterners, particularly the peasant colonists, to support Soviet foreign policy and the Soviet fight against foreign intervention without identifying themselves with the Communist Party and its economic aspirations. On October 25th, 1922, the last Japanese soldier left the Russian mainland and the need for a 'Far Eastern Republic' ceased automatically. The Constituent Assembly of the F.E.R., in which the communists had four-fifths of all seats, decided to hand over its powers to a 'Far Eastern Revolutionary Committee', the *Dalrevkom*, which was already a direct organ of the Soviet Government.

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The decision of the Far Eastern Constituent Assembly did not mean that the Russians of the Far East were in any way united behind the Communist Party. The communists constituted a minority in the Far East even smaller than anywhere else in Soviet Russia. Early in 1922 they had only 7,000 members in the whole of the F.E.R., and this was on the eve of a purge which aimed at a reduction of the membership by 15 to 18 per cent.[2] The Party relied on the support of a section of the 'Far Eastern Trades Union Congress' (D.V.S.P.S.) which had 40,000 members; but how many of them really sympathized with the communists it is impossible to say. In view of its numerical weakness and isolation the communist movement in the Far East had to go carefully and had to make some concessions to regionalist tendencies. Many people in the Russian Far East continued to favour a special status for their homeland and hoped that after the abolition of the F.E.R. it would not become just another Soviet Russian province. At the beginning their hopes were not entirely betrayed.

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THE FAR EASTERN TERRITORY

636 During the whole period from 1922 to 1937–38 the Soviet Far East enjoyed a special position within the Soviet Union. From the administrative point of view the Soviet Far East formed one large unit, the 'Far Eastern Territory' (F.E.T.). It covered roughly one-eighth of the entire surface of the U.S.S.R. The F.E.T. existed from January 1926 until October 1938, but there was a slight amputation of the territory in 1930, when the districts of Sreten and Chita were detached. Militarily, too, the Soviet Far East had a semi-independent existence by the establishment, in August 1929, of the Special Far Eastern Army ('Osobaya Dalnevostochnaya Armiya') usually referred to by its initials as ODVA and a year after its foundation as OKDVA (Osobaya Krasnoznamyonnaya Dalnevostochnaya Armiya', meaning 'Special Far Eastern Army decorated with the Order of the Red Banner').

Both army commanders and administrators in the Far East showed a considerable degree of independence, which, in some cases, even expressed itself in open opposition to the régime. This is true, in particular of the party leaders of Vladivostok, a city which, like that other opposition centre, Leningrad, was a window into the world. The radical course, aiming at the liquidation of the remnants of private property, which the Bolshevik Party took after its Fifteenth Congress (1927) did not meet with approval in a trading centre like Vladivostok. Both [661] Vladivostok and Chita became, in the late twenties, strongholds of a right-wing opposition and the Central Committee in Moscow had to dismiss the local party chiefs.[3]

185 ●578 Difficulties between the centre and the Far Eastern communists continued after the suppression of the right-wing deviation. Problems connected with the implementation of the First and Second Five-Year Plans were an almost inexhaustible source of disagreements. Already during the first Five-Year Plan period the State Planning Commission in Moscow had worked out big development schemes for the Far East, providing for the building of additional railways, an increase of coal and oil production, and far-reaching industrialization. When it became clear that many of the envisaged projects could not be carried out neither Moscow nor Khabarovsk wanted to take the blame for the failure. The central authorities complained about the inefficiency of the 'Far Easterners' and the latter denounced the lack of understanding of the officials at the centre. At the Sixteenth Party Congress, which was held in 1930, the spokesman of the F.E.T., Perepechko, referred to the 'hideous attitude of various central organizations' towards the economic problems of the Far East.[4] If it were not for this negligence, Perepechko asserted, the F.E.T. would carry out the basic tasks of the Five-Year

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185 Plan in three years. The later development showed that it took not three
● 578 but ten years to reach the target figures which the first Five-Year Plan had fixed for the coal and oil production of the Far East.* The Central Government refused to admit that the shortcomings in the Far East resulted from deficiencies of all-Union planning, and tried to put the blame on local scapegoats who were charged with committing deliberate sabotage. More than that, the Central Government alleged that the Far Eastern administrators were 'Japanese spies', although they were, presumably, no more connected with Japan than the Leningrad opposition was linked with Germany. The Far Eastern communists, it is true, had shown great eagerness to establish commercial relations with other Pacific countries including Japan, but this had been done with the agreement of the centre.

THE PURGE OF THE 'CIVILIANS'

661 Although there was no evidence for charges of high treason the Soviet
687 Government carried out a purge on a vast scale throughout the Soviet
665 Far East. It would be incorrect to say that there was one big purge. There were at least two purges, one directed primarily against 'civilian' communists, and another aimed mainly at the army. The first purge, which was closely connected with economic shortcomings, started in the first months of 1937 and led to the disappearance of the head of the administration of the F.E.T., Krutov, and of the party secretary, Lavrentev. At the same time administrative heads and party officials were sacked all over the Soviet Far East. For many months there were no 'first secretaries' in many city committees and district committees of the Communist Party.

There is one aspect of the purge of the 'civilians' in the Far East which deserves special mention, the purge of the railwaymen. The railwaymen of the Far East were traditionally the backbone of the Communist Party in that distant part of the Soviet Union, and the solidity of Moscow's connection with the Pacific coastal areas depended largely on their efficiency. In the 'thirties' their job became increasingly difficult. Between 1933 and 1936 the freight turnover of the Far Eastern railways had increased three times. This was more than they could stand. The Far Eastern railway system broke down. A great many accidents occurred. The Government asserted that they were all engineered 'on instructions of the Japanese intelligence service.' The supreme responsibility for the wrecking of trains was officially attributed to Trotsky and to the

* Production of oil was to reach 464,000 tons by the end of the first Five-Year Plan in 1932. In 1933 output was 196,000 tons; in 1936, 308,000 tons, and in 1938, 360,000 tons. The coal target for 1932 was 4,000,000 tons. In 1933 output had reached 2,020,000 tons, and in 1936, 3,617,000 tons. The target for 1937 was 5,000,000 tons, but actual production in 1938 was only 4,750,000 tons.